

As a nation, we must act to protect this most fundamental, inalienable right for all people.

At his recent confirmation hearing, Governor Brownback pledged to “stand for liberty and stand with the persecuted [and] to promote respect for religious freedom by all governments and peoples.” I believe he will fulfill this pledge, and I thank him for his willingness to serve our country as Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). Without objection, it is so ordered.

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 474.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Jonathan H. Pittman, of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of fifteen years.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nomination with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nomination be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Is there further debate?

If not, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Pittman nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

### VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the confirmation vote on the nomination of R.D. James to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army.

On vote No. 24, had I been present, I would have voted yea on confirmation of the James nomination.●

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

### VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mrs. McCASKILL. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for vote No. 24 on January 25, 2018, on the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 552, R.D. James to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army, Army Corps of Engineers. Had I been present, I would have voted yea.●

### 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE YELLOW RIBBON REINTEGRATION PROGRAM

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program. The National Defense Authorization Act of 2008 established the Department of Defense Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program to assist National Guard and Reserve servicemembers as they transition between their civilian and military roles and back again. The program ensures the readiness of Reserve Component members, their families, and communities before, during, and after deployment.

National Guard and Reserve servicemembers are the backbone of our Nation's military, comprising nearly half of our total force. We have relied on them to support combat missions abroad, and we will continue to rely on them. Nearly 1 million guardsmen and reservists have deployed since September 11, 2001, with nearly 35,000 currently mobilized.

Not only do National Guard and Reserve servicemembers support combat operations, security, and humanitarian missions around the world, they also ensure our safety when unforeseen disasters and emergencies occur. Just this past year, Reserve Component members have responded to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, providing relief and emergency services to hundreds of thousands of Americans. Through their compassion, professionalism, and courage, they protect our way of life, not just abroad, but also here at home.

In establishing the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, Congress recognized that National Guard and Reserve servicemembers face challenges throughout the deployment cycle that

are uniquely different than those confronting their Active-Duty counterparts. Most notably, Reserve Component members often live far from military installations and other members of their units, decreasing their opportunities for support during each stage of deployment.

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program bridges this gap by connecting National Guard and Reserve servicemembers and their families with resources where they live and provides a support network to aide their unique challenges. Through the program, Reserve Component members and their families gain access to relevant information and resources, including family and marriage counseling, financial planning and education, small business planning, legal benefits, healthcare information, employment training opportunities, and veterans benefits education.

I had the distinct pleasure of working with Congressman John Kline and Senators Norm Coleman, Saxby Chambliss, and JOHNNY ISAKSON in introducing the legislation that created the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program in 2008. I am pleased to say the Minnesota National Guard's program, Beyond the Yellow Ribbon, sought to improve how Minnesota's servicemembers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan experienced reintegration and became the model for the national program we are recognizing today.

Since its launch, the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program's pre, during, and postdeployment events have supported more than 1.5 million servicemembers and their families. These 10 years have demonstrated the necessity of the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program's mission in maintaining the readiness of National Guard and Reserve servicemembers, their families, and their communities.

I am sure the entire Senate will join with me in congratulating the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program on the successes that have brought it to its 10th anniversary and supporting its continued success moving forward.

### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

#### TRIBUTE TO DANIELLE HIGHLEY AND JAXON AGEE

• Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, this week I have the honor of recognizing two of Montana's 24,000 children who benefit from the Children's Health Insurance Program, better known as CHIP. Jaxon Agee of Helena was diagnosed with Leigh syndrome as a baby. Access to a pediatrician is absolutely critical for Jaxon. Despite having a team of medical professionals who work to ensure he remains healthy, he has had to be flown from Helena to Community Medical Center's pediatric intensive care unit in Missoula several times. Jaxon's family is committed to caring for their son no matter what,

but CHIP helps them manage Jaxon's condition and makes well-baby checks more affordable, ultimately lowering the odds of another emergency visit.

Danielle Highley of Deer Lodge is another Montana kid who relies on CHIP funding. At just 18 months of age, Danielle lost the ability to walk. A form of juvenile arthritis proved to be a costly condition, as injections and infusions cost several thousand dollars, but when Danielle has consistent treatment, she can walk, run, and play like a kid again. Before being enrolled in CHIP, Danielle went without treatment for 3 months, and she again lost the ability to walk. CHIP has allowed Danielle the opportunity to get treatment and be a kid again. She is back in school, and when she grows up, of all things, she hopes to be a doctor for kids. I am also pleased to announce that she will be joining me as my guest at the State of the Union.

Jaxon and Danielle, thank you for sharing your stories. I am so glad that Congress has passed, and the President has signed into law a 6-year reauthorization of the program, the longest in its history. Now, the families of the 24,000 Montana children who depend on CHIP can rest assured their children will continue to have access to critical care.●

#### TRIBUTE TO ERIN COSKY

● Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I ask to have printed in the RECORD an article that was published in yesterday's Pensacola News Journal, "Meet the Santa Rosa Teacher of the Year." I commend Ms. Erin Cosky for her dedication to Florida's students, and wish her well in the State's Teacher of the Year selection process.

The material follows:

[From the Pensacola News Journal USA Today Network, Jan. 24, 2018]

**MEET THE SANTA ROSA TEACHER OF THE YEAR**  
FLORIDA.—Gulf Breeze High School science teacher Erin Cosky has been selected as the Santa Rosa County School District's Teacher of the Year.

The news was announced during a surprise visit to Cosky's classroom Wednesday morning.

Cosky teaches earth and space science and advanced placement environmental science at the school. She is Santa Rosa's nominee for the Florida Department of Education's Teacher of the Year 2019.

The Florida Teacher of the Year will be selected in May and will serve as Florida's nominee for National Teacher of the Year, which will be announced in January 2019. Cosky, other nominees for the award and all Santa Rosa County educators will be honored at Santa Rosa's Golden Apple Celebration on March 2.●

#### TRIBUTE TO SAMANTHA NEFF, LEESA LAVENDER, AND JULIE DELRUSSO

● Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I ask to have printed in the RECORD an article that was published in the Orlando Sentinel, "Seminole Announces Three

Teacher-of-the-Year Finalists." I commend Ms. Samantha Neff, Ms. Leesa Lavender, and Ms. Julie DelRusso for their dedication to Florida's students and wish them well in the State's Teacher of the Year Selection process.

The material follows:

[From the Orlando Sentinel, Jan. 24, 2018]

**SEMINOLE ANNOUNCES THREE TEACHER-OF-THE-YEAR FINALISTS**

(By Leslie Postal)

A math coach, a civics teacher and a high school instructor who works with students with disabilities were tapped Wednesday as finalists for Seminole County's teacher-of-the-year honors.

The winner will be announced March 15 and will then be in the running for Florida's top teacher award.

Seminole's three finalists are:

Samantha Neff, a math coach at Idyllwild Elementary School, who has been an elementary school teacher in the district for 17 years and also teaches at the University of Central Florida.

Leesa Lavender, a seventh-grade civics teacher at Markham Woods Middle School, who has taught middle school social studies since 2007.

Julie DelRusso, who works with 9th-to-12th-grade students through the district's Exceptional Student Support Services Department. She's been a teacher with the district for 25 years.

The district will announce the winner at the teacher-of-the-year ceremony at the Hilton Orlando/Altamonte Springs.●

#### TRIBUTE TO COLTON MEEHAN

● Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I recognize Colton Meehan, an intern in my Washington, DC, office, for all of the hard work he has done for me, my staff, and the State of South Dakota.

Colton is a graduate of the University of California, Santa Cruz, having earned a degree in politics. He is a dedicated worker who has been committed to getting the most out of his experience.

I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Colton Meehan for all of the fine work he has done and wish him continued success in the years to come.●

#### MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Cuccia, one of his secretaries.

#### EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting nominations which were referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

(The message received today is printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

#### EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with

accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-4132. A communication from the Secretary of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Technical Amendments to Rules of Registration and Review of Exchange Disciplinary, Access Denial or Other Adverse Actions" (RIN3038-AE15) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 23, 2018; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4133. A communication from the Management Analyst, Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "United States Standards for Barley" (7 CFR Part 800 and 810) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 23, 2018; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4134. A communication from the White House Liaison, Department of Education, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a vacancy in the position of Assistant Secretary, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 23, 2018; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-4135. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 22-230, "Health Literacy Council Establishment Act of 2017"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-4136. A communication from the Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legislative Affairs, Department of Justice, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA) Quarterly Report to Congress; First Quarter of Fiscal Year 2018"; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

#### EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEE

The following executive reports of nominations were submitted:

By Mr. INHOFE for Mr. McCain for the Committee on Armed Services.

Army nomination of Maj. Gen. Scott D. Berrier, to be Lieutenant General.

Air Force nomination of Brig. Gen. Charles L. Plummer, to be Major General.

Air Force nomination of Col. Sharon R. Bannister, to be Brigadier General.

Air Force nomination of Maj. Gen. Jeffery A. Rockwell, to be Lieutenant General.

Army nominations beginning with Col. Anthony R. Hale and ending with Col. Garrick M. Harmon, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record on December 11, 2017.

Army nomination of Maj. Gen. Eric J. Wesley, to be Lieutenant General.

Army nomination of Maj. Gen. Theodore D. Martin, to be Lieutenant General.

Army nomination of Col. Susie S. Kuilan, to be Brigadier General.

Army nomination of Maj. Gen. Leslie C. Smith, to be Lieutenant General.

Navy nomination of Rear Adm. (1h) Johnny R. Wolfe, Jr., to be Vice Admiral.

Navy nomination of Capt. John C. Ring, to be Rear Admiral (lower half).

Navy nomination of Rear Adm. (1h) Scott D. Conn, to be Rear Admiral.

Mr. INHOFE for Mr. McCain. Mr. President, for the Committee on Armed